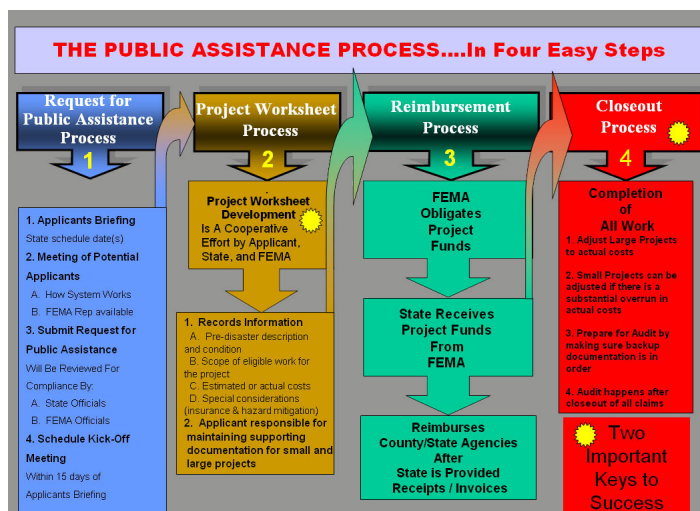


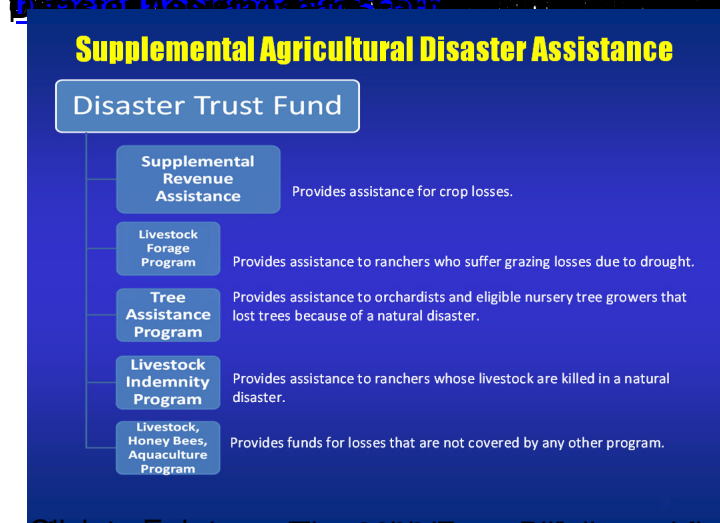


When natural disaster strikes – whether from a flood, hurricane, or tornado – it is imperative that we work quickly and efficiently to restore and rebuild. In 1994, as a freshman member of Congress, Hurricane Alberto dropped what was then the worst flood in modern times on Southwest Georgia. We evacuated 40,000 people and ultimately rebuilt nearly 12,000 homes, businesses, and schools. It became a defining moment for me as a leader and legislator and not just because it gave me an opportunity to roll up my sleeves and help my constituents. I became aware of the unique challenges that disasters present to poor, rural and disadvantaged communities.

Although local and state governments share responsibility for protecting their citizens from disasters and for helping them recover when a disaster strikes, some disasters exceed the state and local governments' response capabilities. In these cases, federal assistance is crucial to alleviating the short and long-term impact that natural disasters have on our communities and is essential to helping victims get back on their feet. The process of federal assistance begins with the state's governor, who must request assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). For more information about the declarations process, read [FEMA's Guide to the Disaster Declarations Process and Federal Disaster Assistance](#)



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